



# Critical Issues in Sign Language Interpretation for Social Work Practice

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## GLOBAL FIELD AGENCY:

I conducted my Global Independent Study in partnership with the Bob Rumball Canadian Centre of Excellence for the Deaf in Toronto, Canada.

The Bob Rumball Canadian Centre of Excellence for the Deaf (formerly the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf) was the first facility of its kind, and for over 30 years it has provided the Deaf Community a space without communication barriers. Within this space an educational, independent living, and a social environment for the Deaf has blossomed.

From its starting point as a community recreation facility, the Bob Rumball Centre has expanded into offering a range of specialized services to those within the Deaf Community that require support. These include seniors', those with developmental, physical, health, or mental health issues, infants and young children, and newcomers to Canada.

## OUTCOMES:

Before my Global Independent Study in Toronto, I prepared by beginning a 3-credit independent study course (SW 528). This independent study was to build on previous work regarding multilingual social work practice by including American Sign Language and Deaf clients in the conception of bilingual and multilingual practice. To conduct this independent study, I incorporated:

- A literature review regarding particular issues that face Deaf clients related to lack of access to American Sign Language interpreters
- Interviews with social workers and mental health practitioners who work with Deaf clients in Michigan and Toronto
- Meeting with leadership at The Bob Rumball Canadian Centre of Excellence for the Deaf to further expand on these issues
- A practice note that included parts of all of these elements as well as case examples that illustrate how some of these issues play out in social work practice and settings



Lake Ontario, Woodbine Beach

## CONNECTIONS:

### Classroom:

- **SW 522: Basic Social Work Research**

For my final project, I wrote a literature review on how American Sign Language fosters a culturally Deaf identity (or awareness of it).

- **SW 528: Independent Study**

As a complement to my Global Independent Study, I also completed a 3-credit independent study with Professor Rogerio Pinto. More information about this independent study can be found under “Outcomes” on this poster.

### Career:

After completing my MSW, I intend to continue on to a PhD, where I would be able to build on this work and intersect it with immigration-related problems. I have been focused on working with the Deaf population since the end of high school, when I was first exposed to American Sign Language. I do hope to obtain my licensure and to work with Deaf clients, in addition to my academic endeavors. I am also interested in the policy implications of American Sign Language interpretation and the marginalization of immigrants with disabilities.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Thank you to the Office of Global Activities for their support throughout the Global Independent Study process. I also want to thank Professor Rogerio Pinto, who advised my independent study and continues to work with me to advance this project. Finally, I appreciate the willingness and kindness of the Bob Rumball Canadian Centre of Excellence for the Deaf’s staff, particularly Rosanna Ascenzo.

## LESSONS LEARNED:

- While we are the architects of our Global Independent Studies, working in global social work demands our deferral to the communities abroad. We must tweak our initial research ideas as we communicate and integrate into the community.
- The nature of this work is trial and error, and we must be comfortable with that process.
- No response from stakeholders and organizations is likely. Keep looking for avenues to connect without pushing too hard.

## SKILLS DEVELOPED:

During this Global Independent Study, I continued to develop the following skills:

- Using American Sign Language confidently
- Interviewing skills, including the process of formulating pertinent questions
- Creatively reach out to stakeholders and assert myself without overstepping cultural boundaries
- Writing skills, when constructing my SW 528 paper

## ADVICE:

- Do not assume anyone else cares about your project or idea as much as you do. Bring people into the fold and share your process with the community and your partners. Transparency is important.
- Remember to explore the city or country in other ways. It may not seem connected to the project, but it is also imperative to continue to challenge yourself and your privileges by interacting with the place and community in as many ways as possible.



Sunset at Christy Pitts Park